



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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### **NOAA Fisheries Reminds Shrimp Fishermen of Tow Time Restrictions on Skimmer, Pusher-head, and Wing-Net Trawls in Lieu of TEDs**

Fishermen using skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing-net trawls are required under 50 CFR 223.206(d)(2)(ii)(A) to continue to use tow time limits instead of TEDs to help prevent incidental catch of turtles. Tow time restrictions limit tow times to 55 minutes from April 1 through October 31, and 75 minutes from November 1 through March 31. Per the TED requirements at 50 CFR 223.206(d)(3)(i), tow time is measured from the time the codend enters the water until it is removed from the water. It is important that each entire net be examined for potentially captured sea turtles, particularly given the small size of sea turtles typically caught inshore. Raising the net to the surface of the water to determine the size of the catch, without removing the codend from the water, does not serve to end the tow under the regulations. For example, if a net is towed 35 minutes, then raised to the surface of the water to determine the size of the catch, without removing the codend from the water, and then lowered back down and towed for an additional 25 minutes before the codend is removed from the water and dumped on deck, the tow time would be 60 minutes.

The purpose of these tow time restrictions is to allow inshore shrimp vessels the opportunity to fish in waters where endangered and threatened sea turtles live while still protecting the sea turtles that live there. NOAA Fisheries recently concluded that requiring all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets (butterfly trawls) to TEDs in their nets is not warranted at this time

([http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/endangered%20species/Shrimp%20Fishery/Fisheries%20Bulletin\\_withdraw.pdf](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/endangered%20species/Shrimp%20Fishery/Fisheries%20Bulletin_withdraw.pdf)). Although NOAA Fisheries is continuing to work on other solutions, including modifications to existing legal TEDs, at this time, limiting the amount of time a net is pulled underwater is currently the only known way to reduce the impacts that these types of shrimp trawls have on all sea turtles. Most sea turtles can survive for up to an hour or more underwater. If skimmer trawl, pusher-head, and wing-net vessels regularly exceed the tow time restrictions and kill incidentally captured sea turtles, the fishery may be subject to additional management measures such as closures until gear solutions are available.

**For More Information:** For more information, please refer to the following NOAA Fisheries Web site: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/prd/.htm>.